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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000920

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM ASEC HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: ZELAYA CABINET COMMITTED TO SAN JOSE, BUT
WORRIED ABOUT POTENTIAL FOR ANARCHY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR HUGO LLORENS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Cabinet officials of President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya told the Ambassador on September 15 that their government is committed to the San Jose process. However, they expressed concern that their supporters are losing patience and are starting to advocate adoption of extreme measures to overthrow the de facto regime. They warned that the electoral process is in jeopardy because coup opponents believe the regime is manipulating it to gain legitimacy.
End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met on September 15 with members of the Cabinet of President Zelaya: Secretary of Governance and Justice Victor Meza, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Patricia Licona, Secretary of Health Carlos Aguilar, Secretary of Industry and Commerce Fredis Cerrato, Secretary of Labor Mayra Mejia, Secretary of Tourism Ricardo Martinez, Director of the National Agricultural Institute Jose Francisco Funes, Secretary of Cooperation Karen Lizette Zelaya, Poverty Reduction Strategy Commissioner Fernando Garcia, Under Secretary of Transport and Housing Marco Velasquez, Secretary of Citizen Empowerment Marco Antonio Rosa, Secretary of Social Affairs Arcadia Gomez, Central Bank Director Carlos Orbin Montoya, National Statistics Institute Director Sergio Sanchez, and Minister of Science and Technology Miriam Mejia.

The Deputy Chief of Mission and the Economic and Political Counselors also participated in the meeting. The Ambassador said the San Jose Accord provides an opportunity for the polarized Honduran society to reconcile. He suggested to the Cabinet members that they encourage the presidential candidates to show leadership for the sake of their country and support the San Jose process.

Commitment to San Jose

¶3. (C) Secretary of Governance and Justice Meza stated unequivocally that President Zelaya and his government are committed to the mediation being conducted by Costa Rican President Arias. He said he would call the presidential candidates to urge their support for San Jose. Several Cabinet members urged the United States and the international community to put into effect economic and commercial sanctions against the regime as a form of leverage to persuade them to sign the San Jose Accord.

Time Running Out and Elections in Jeopardy

14. (C) Meza noted that the ranks of regime opponents are growing and that they are becoming better organized. Cabinet members claimed they mobilized half a million Zelaya supporters to participate in a march earlier in the day, Honduras' national independence day. Meza warned that as the resistance grows and the regime becomes weaker, it is likely to become more authoritarian and take more repressive measures. Several Cabinet members said that Zelaya supporters' patience is running out and that many are advocating violent measures to bring down the de facto regime. Secretary of Industry and Commerce Cerrato expressed concern that the government will lose control over the Zelaya supporters and that violence will break out. The Ambassador stressed the importance of avoiding violence, saying that any violence would erode international support for Zelaya.

15. (C) Several Cabinet members cautioned that unless a solution to the crisis is found soon the electoral process is in jeopardy. They said Zelaya supporters are beginning to view the elections as a method for the de facto regime to legitimize the coup and thus don't want to support the process. They said the elections are not legitimate and there is no guarantee that the regime will allow all citizens access to the polls. Some said it made no sense for President Zelaya to return to Honduras as late as one month before the election scheduled for November 29.

16. (C) Comment: Zelaya cabinet members were more pessimistic about the return of Zelaya than in their last meeting with the Ambassador August 6 (ref). A significant number of them took more radical positions; the predictions of possible

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violence are a cause for concern.
LLORENS